

7. PUBLIC INVOLVEMENT

7.1. SCOPING AND DRAFT SEIS

A Notice of Intent (NOI) to prepare a draft of this SEIS appeared in the Federal Register on August 3, 2005. In addition, a scoping letter, dated July 21, 2005, was sent out by the Corps to agencies and interested parties soliciting views, comments, and information about environmental and cultural resources, study objectives and important issues within the study area. During the 60-day comment period, many written responses were received and represented several issues. These issues were subsequently compiled and infused into the plan formulation process. A sampling of issues resulting from the scoping process are included in Section 1.7. A copy of the Corps' scoping letter and NOI can be found in Appendix C. It should be noted that the 60-day scoping comment period was extended through November 2005 due to the impact of Hurricane Wilma on the South Florida regional communities.

Four public scoping meetings were conducted at the following locations:

- Clewiston October 11, 2005
- Ft. Myers November 14, 2005
- Okeechobee November 15, 2005
- Stuart November 17, 2005

In addition to the scoping meetings, public workshops were held during the planning phase of the regulation schedule development. The first workshop was held at the Okeechobee Civic Center in Okeechobee, Florida on February 22, 2006. The purpose of the public workshop was to present the LORS alternatives under consideration. Interested individuals, groups, and agencies were invited to attend and were given an opportunity to comment and ask questions. The workshop was video taped and can be found on the Corps' Jacksonville District webpage at: www.saj.usace.army.mil. A second round of workshops was held on the following dates: July 11, 2006 at John Boy Auditorium in Clewiston, Florida; July 12, 2006 at the Lee County Commission Chambers in Fort Myers, Florida; and July 13, 2006 at Indian River Community College in Stuart, Florida. The purpose of the public workshops was to inform the public of the tentative selected plan (or Preferred Alternative regulation schedule). Numerous presentations to the Water Resources Advisory Commission (WRAC)/Lake Okeechobee Committee were also conducted throughout the study process.

7.2. AGENCY COORDINATION

Coordination with local, state and federal agencies was achieved by inviting staff of those agencies to participate as team members. Team members were invited to participate in weekly team meetings via teleconference and video conference throughout the Planning process of the study. The EPA, USFWS, NMFS, FDEP, FFWCC, SFWMD, Seminole Tribe of Florida, Lake Worth Drainage District, city governments of Lee County, City of Sanibel, Broward County, and Miami-Dade County Office of Water Management, all contributed one or more staff as active participants of

the study team. The issues and concerns of these agencies and governments were continuously a part of study team activities.

7.3. LIST OF STATEMENT RECIPIENTS (DRAFT SEIS)

Copies of the draft SEIS were sent to local, state, and federal agencies, interested parties and individuals for review and comment in accordance with the Council on Environmental Quality's NEPA regulations and related Corps guidance. A complete mailing list can be found in Appendix C. In addition, the draft SEIS can be found at the following Corps website:

<http://planning.saj.usace.army.mil/envdocs/envdocsb.htm>.

7.4. COMMENTS RECEIVED AND RESPONSE

A period of time for comments will be set aside in accordance with the NEPA to provide all interested parties an opportunity to comment on the contents of the SEIS. Letters and comments received on the draft SEIS will be included in the final SEIS.